of the Council of State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj held during August, 2005 and June, 2006. The NDC Empowered Sub-Committee on Devolution has also been brought under the chairpersonship of the Minister of Panchayati Raj and has since held three meetings in June, September and December 2006.

Besides, the Union Minister has visited over 150 Gram Sabhas, Village Panchayats, Intermediate Panchayats and District Panchayats across 21 States/Union Territories and with 19 of them concluded State-specific Joint Statements of Conclusions. (The Joint Statement with Tamil Nadu is under consideration and it was decided not to proceed with Chandigarh and the Chandigarh Administration intends to incorporate all panchayats areas in Municipality).

In addition, two mega Conferences have been held. The first conference on the 'State of Panchayats and way forward' was held from 16-18 December, 2005 in New Delhi which was attended by Research Scholars, activists, functionaries and elected representatives of Panchayats. The second conference of 'Writers and Thinkers' was held in June, 2006 to discuss all aspects of Panchayati Raj in India including the measures to strengthen Panchayati Raj and to take it forward.

Full details on all these measures will be found in the "State of Panchayats—Mid-Term Review and Appraisal" submitted to the House in three volumes on 23 November, 2006.

Backward Regions Grant Fund

†1104. SHRI BASHISTHA NARAIN SINGH: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) the districts in the State of Bihar included under Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF);

(b) the salient featrues of the scheme;

(c) the details of the works which would be taken up in various districts under this scheme and regulatory mechanism thereof;

(d) the role of Panchayats in this regard; and

(e) the manner in which Government would provide training to representatives of Panchayats for proper implementation of the scheme?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYER): (a)and(b) 36 districts of Bihar are included under the Backward Regions Grant Fund programme. A list of these districts may be seen at Statement I. *(See* below). The salient features of the programme may be seen at Statement-ll *(See* below).

(c) to (e) The objective of the programme is to supplement and converge the existing developmental inclows into indentified districts. Therefore, the developmental grant under this programme is substantially untied and can be sused by Panchayats and Urban local bodies for any purpose within the items of works that are devolved to them respectively as listed in the Eleventh and Twelfth schedule of the Constitution. The Panchayats, Municipalities and District Planning Committeers, would plan and manage the programme under the guidelines. The guidelines include a National Capability Building Framework for Panchayati Raj elected representatives and functionaries. The framework suggests training content as well as the duration of training programmes. A capacity building fund calculated @ Rs. 1 crore per districts can be released to each State during 2006-07 for its capacity building plan in backward districts covered under BRGF. Bihar is entitled to a capacity building fund of Rs. 36 crores building component includes a number of sub-components apart from training of elected Panchayat representatives. A copy of the relevant provisions in the guidelines is at Statement-Ill.

Statement-I

Names of districts included under Backward Region Grant Fund Programme in Bihar

Bihar

1 Araria	2 Aurangabad	3 Banka	4 Begusarai
5 Bhagalpur	6 Bhojpur	7 Buxar	8 Darbhanga
9 Gaya	10 Gopalganj	11 Jamui	12 Jehanabad
13Kaimur/Bhabua	14 Katihar	15 Kishanganj	16 Khagaria
17 Lakhisarai	18 Madhepura	19 Madhubani	20 Munger
21 Muzzarffarpur	22 Nalanda	23 Nawadah	24 Patna
25 Pashchim : Champaran	26 Purba Champaran	27 Purnia	28 Rohtas
29 Saharaa	30 Samastipur	31 Saran	32 Sheikhpura
33 Sheohar	34 Sitamarhi	35 Supaul	36 Vaishali

Statement-ll

Salient features of the guidelines for the districts component of the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF)

The Backward Regions Grant Fund is designed to redress regional imbalances in development. The fund will provide financial resources for supplementing and converging existing developmental inflows into identified districts, so as to (a) bridge critical gap in local infrastructure and other development requirements that are not being adequately met through existing inflows, (b) strengthen Panchayat and Municipality level governance with more appropriate capacity building, to facilitate participatory planning, decision making, implementation and monitoring, to reflect local felt needs, (c) provide professional support to local bodies for planning, implementation and monioring their plans, (d) improve the performance and delivery of critical functions assigned to Panchayats, and counter possible efficiency and equity losses on account of inadequate local capacity.

The implementing Ministry for the BRGF districts is the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The Ministry has prepared and issued the guidelines for implementation of the BRGF recently. The guidelines have been placed on the website of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (http://www,panchayat. gov.in). The salient features of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj are as follows:

(i) The BRGF covers 250 districts including all the 147 districts covered by the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY).

(ii) BRGF consists of two funding windows, namely, a Capacity Building Fund of Rs. 250 crore per annum, and a substantially untied grant of Rs. 3500 crore for 2006-07 (outlay during the Eleventh Plan period to be intimated in due course).

(iii) The substantially united grant will be distributed among the districts as follows: (a) every district will receive a fixed minimum amount of Rs. 10 crore per annum, and (b) the balance allocation under the scheme will be made on the basis of the share of the population and area of the districts in the total population and area of all the backward districts.

(iv) All the 147 RSVY districts will be released funds till the plans approved under RSVY (plus the existing monitoring fee) have

been completed to the extent approve. Non-RSVY-BRGF districts will begin the process of District Plan preparation in 2006-07 in accordance with these guidelines.

(v) Each Panchayat or Municipality within the backward district concerned will be the unit for planning under BRGF. Plans prepared by each Panchayat or Municipality will be consolidated into the District Plan by the District Planning Committee, constituted in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

(vi) During the consolidation of the District Plan, particular care shall be taken to ensure that the District Plan addresses issues relating to SC/ST development.

(vii) The State Government will designate a department, preferably the Department of Panchayati Raj, as the nodal department at the State level, responsible for the management, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

(viii) A High Powered Committee headed by the State Chief Secretary and consisting of Members from various departments of State Government and the Central Ministries will consider and approve the proposed District Plans to be taken up under the districts component of the BRGF.

(ix) Ail funds will be transferred to the Consolidated Funds of the State Governments. Those funds that are to be transferred to Panchayats and Municipalities by the State Governments will be transferred to their bank accounts within 15 days of the release of funds to the Consolidated Funds.

(x) Audit, Inspection of works, preparation of booklet of verification of works and progress reports will be done as per the procedure prescribed.

(xi) Separate guidelines have been provided in Chapter 5 for the States and districts not covered by Part IX and Part IX A of the Constitution.

Statement-Ill

Copy of the provisions in the guidelines

Resources for funding the Training Programme:

Effective implementation of BRGF will require continuous and sustained building of the capability of all Stakeholders. An Amount of Rs. 250 crore per annum is especially earmarked under BRGF for capability building of Panchayats. The allocation of funds for each State is calculated at the rate of Rs. 1 crore per BRGF districts in that State. In addition, funds may be earmarked for certain aspects of capability building from the development grant for the district as described in this chapter.

The various components of capability building and the sources of funds for the same within the BRGF

Table 1:

	Component of capability	Description of sub-components	Source of funds
1		2	3
(a)	Provision of. adequate functionaries for Panchayats for planning and implementation	The functionaries at the Panchayat level can be augmented in the manner described in Para 3.23 below. Augmenting functionaries for Panchayats and Municipalities can be undertaken on the following conditions: (a) This amont *should not* be *used* to pay the salaries of existing Government staff working at the Panchayats and Municipalities level. (b) This facility shall be used only for essential staff wherever gaps exist .	Earmarking 5 per cent of the development grant allocated for the district.

1	2	3
	(c) Staff shall be recruited by the Panchayats or Municipalities, in the manner prescribed by the State Government, (d) Panchayats may progressively take over the responsibility of paying staff salaries, utilizing financial transfers such as State and Central Finance Commission grants or own revenues to bridge the gap.	
(b) Provision of technical assistance, or providing scope for the outsourcing of technical support for planning and implementation, particularly the accessing of services of resource persons to support PRIs as well as Grama Sabhas in the decentralized planning process	(a) Establishing extention or Resource Centre if required, at each Intermediate Panchayat level or below, for the use of all Panchayats and Municipalities, with pooled staff from development departments arid/or experts. (b) Access the services of resource persons and professionals through outsourcing,	From the Rs. 250 crore capability building fund. '
(c) Providing sufficient office infrastructure, including office buildings wherever required and connectivity to these offices through roads, telephones,	Physical infrastructure for the conduct of Panchayat affairs provided 30 per cent of. the cost is contributed from other sources. Acquiring computers and peripherals, and providing interface equipment which may be required for broadband connectivity, and training for software use at each Panchayat level.	Using developmental grants. Funded from the Rs. 250 crore capability-building fund.

	1	2	3
	power supply and e-connectivity,	Telephone connections to all Panchayats	An effort will be made by the Department of Telecommunication to provide telephone connections to Panchayats, which seek such a facility.
(d)	Providing adequate training,	Implementation of training perspective plan as described in the National Capability Building Framework, placed at Annexe 3. Establishment and maintenance of help lines, as described in Annexe 3. For the proposed help lines, any of the existing telecome providers operating in the State/District may be selected through a tender or any other transparent process.	From the Rs. 250 crore capability building fund.
(e)	Conduct of surveys, studies on backwardness and development of a baseline databank,	Entering data on to the National Panchayat Portal in respect of each Panchayat and development it in each Panchayat progressively. Preparation of a multi-layered GIS based database for local planning, using information put together by the Department of Space and NIC.	From the Rs. 250 crore capability building fund.
(f)	Establishment and maintenance of the accounting and auditing system,		From the Rs. 250 crore capability building fund.
(g)	Securing assistance for Panchayats and the District Planning Committee for preparing and consolidating plans.		From the Rs. 250 crore capability building fund.

Provision of Training:

The objectives of the training component of Capability building (Component 'd' in Table 1 above) are as follows:

(a) Upgrading the knowledge and skills of all Panchayats and Municipalities elected representatives to better perform their responsibilities.

(b) Orient key officials associated with functions devolved to Panchayats and who are working under or closely with them to effectively serve and facilitate the Panchayats in the performance of devolved functions.

(c) Improve functioning of the Gram Sabha, particularly through building the capability of pressure groups such as SHGs and CBOs to participate more meaningfully.

Within the broad parameters of the National Capability Building Framework prepared by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Annexe 3), State and District specific training strategies and plans should be prepared by respective State Governments, which will be suitably supported by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. A State Capability Building Perspective Plan for 5 years, addressing the components described above may be prepared by each State. For this purpose, States may designate a nodal agency, such as the SIRD for preparation and management of the training plan. Technical assistance may be provided by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj for the preparation of State specific perspective plan document for training.

The High-level monitoring and implementation committee at the State level may approve the plan before implementation. The costs can include both capital and revenue costs.

Funds will be released annually by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on the following conditions:

(a) Receipt of the plan approved by the High level committee set up at the State level,

(b) Indication of the funds proposed to be retained at the State level for implementation purposes described in the table above and the funds that will be sent to each district,

(c) An annual plan, drawn from the perspective plan, indicating the programmes to be taken up in the year in question, with allocations for each component within it.

Draft for effective functioning of Panchayats

†1105. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Government have asked the States to submit a draft for effective functioning of Panchayats in the country;

(b) if so, the progress made in this regard;

(c) the names of States which have sent the said draft in this regard; and

(d) the progress made in the direction of decentralisation of administrative and financial powers to strengthen the panchayats?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) No, Sir. Central Government-have not asked the States to submit any draft for offective functioning of Panchayats in the country.

(b) and (c) Do notarise.

(d) The devolution of powers as envisaged in the Constitution 73rd Amendment is primarily the responsbility of State Governments. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened seven Round Table Conferences with the State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj between July, 2004 and December, 2004. A set of 150 action points were evolved by consensus and adopted unanimously at the conclusion of the last Round Table in Jaipur in December, 2004. Consultative mechanisms have been set up by the Government of India and State Governments to follow up the Round Table Conferences which comprise a Council of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister for Panchayati Raj and a Committee of Chief Secretaries of States and State Panchayati Raj Secretaries under the Chairmanship of the Union Secretary (Panchayati Raj). Seven meetings of State Secretaries of Panchayati Raj have been held between April, 2005 and September, 2006 and two meetings of the Council of State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj held during August, 2005 and June, 2006. The NDC Empowered Sub-Committee on Devolution

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.